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91st plenary meeting

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Official Records

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 12.10 p.m.

Agenda item 7 (continued)

Organization of work, adoption of the agenda and allocation of items

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Members will recall that the General Assembly concluded its consideration of agenda item 20 at its 43rd plenary meeting, on 10 November 2008.

In order to enable the General Assembly to consider this item upon the request of several Member States, it will be necessary to reopen consideration of agenda item 20. May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to reopen consideration of agenda item 20?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): May I further take it that the Assembly agrees to proceed immediately to the consideration of agenda item 20?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 20 (continued)

The situation in Central America: progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

The President: It is with a heavy heart and deep personal outrage that I open this plenary meeting to consider the coup d'état that interrupted the democratic

and constitutional rule of President José Manuel Zelaya Rosales in the Republic of Honduras yesterday, 28 June.

In response to urgent requests from many Member States, it is my responsibility and duty to bring this outrageous attack on Honduran democracy to the attention of the General Assembly so that we might consider ways to ensure the peaceful restoration of the legitimate Government of President Zelaya in the hours and days ahead.

As a Nicaraguan, I am ashamed that this coup has taken place in Central America during my presidency of the General Assembly. It is a throwback to another era that we had hoped was now a distant nightmare. Latin America and the Caribbean have the ignominious record of being the region with the greatest number of military coups in the world. That is a record that has no place in the twenty-first century.

The first so-called anti-communist coup was against the democratically elected Government of President Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán in 1954 in neighbouring Guatemala. In the 1970s and 1980s, virtually every country on the continent was humiliated, subjugated, violated and brutalized by military regimes that usurped power for the sake of promoting the interests of the United States of America and its local caretakers, who always claimed to be motivated by the need to defend their own peculiar understanding of democracy and freedom.

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Those were bloody, oppressive years when the best of our workers and *campesinos*, students, artists and politicians were abducted, imprisoned and assassinated or forced into exile. Those were lost decades in the development of our region, and only in recent years have we managed to recover democratic rule throughout the region. But our societies are permanently scarred by the atrocities committed to make them safe for corporate profits and unfettered markets.

On Sunday morning — that is to say, yesterday — at 4 a.m. Honduran time, masked men with automatic weapons invaded the residence of President Zelaya and swept him away to exile in Costa Rica. This represents the first coup in the region since the end of the cold war. It is not the first attempt, however. Reactionary forces, which have never given a hoot for the growing number of our dispossessed, are now alarmed by the remarkably powerful movements that have brought progressive Governments to power in response to the disastrous consequences brought about by anti-people neoliberal policies.

Let us remember the failed coup d'état against the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in 2002 and the continuing destabilization that seeks to disrupt the first presidency of a representative of the indigenous people of the Plurinational State of Bolivia. We must make certain that this act of infamy in Honduras also ends in absolute failure.

The region has responded with outrage and with demands for the immediate restoration of the legitimate Government. The Organization of American States has issued a very responsible and good declaration, and the Rio Group, the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas and the Central American Integration System have all decried the military action in Honduras. Leaders around the world have denounced the military action.

Now it is appropriate and crucial that the entire world community, the group of 192 members of the General Assembly, add its voice to underscore the universal rejection of this crime. Let us denounce the perpetrators with such unanimity that no military-backed regime in Honduras will be able to withstand the criticism and rejection of the world.

Today, we are concluding the historic United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development,

which began on 24 June. Many Member States have expressed their concern about the social unrest and political instability that have resulted from the ongoing economic calamity that is raining down on virtually every country around the world. This only exacerbates the unrest created by the criminal military coup in Honduras, which we hope will be very short-lived.

Certainly, the call for a constitutional amendment to extend presidential term limits is in no way illegitimate. Over the past 15 years, several Latin American countries, including Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela, have held plebiscites on such proposals, and new legislation has often been adopted without incident.

The forces behind this crime must be exposed and brought to justice. More important, we must not let them take advantage of the economic turmoil in order to return to business as usual. We must allow the peoples of the world to choose their Governments for themselves and listen to their voices, which call for justice and participation in their societies and their economies. Let us not allow those voices to be extinguished, as all of us would then be diminished and our future dimmed.

I declare my total and unconditional solidarity with President José Manuel Zelaya Rosales, the only legitimate, democratically elected and constitutional head of State of the Republic of Honduras. Long live the people of Honduras!

I also wish to inform members that, as President of the General Assembly, I have sent a letter to President José Manuel Zelaya Rosales of Honduras inviting him to come to the United Nations to address the General Assembly as soon as possible to give us an updated report on events in his country.

Mr. Reina Idiaquez (Honduras) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am here at a tragic moment in the history of Honduras, but we are certain that this is a time of transition from which the country's democratic order will emerge strengthened. I am also here to represent the legitimate President of the Republic of Honduras, Mr. José Manuel Zelaya Rosales. It is a shame that coups d'état are still taking place. We had hoped that they were things of the past, but forces that stand in opposition to peoples and democracy are rising up once again.

This is a statement that, like any other representative in the Hall, I would have preferred not to have to deliver. It is not pleasant to have to condemn an attack against a regime that has been constitutionally and democratically established in full respect for the law and with the supreme mandate of the people of Honduras to manage the country's future — a Government transparently chosen in completely free elections that were observed by the entire international community.

I wish to talk about democracy — about what it is, how it is nourished, who it benefits and why it is so crucial to our lives and the lives of our peoples today. Democracy certainly means the participation of citizens in the election of the leaders who will manage their future while fully adhering to the law and respect for minorities and majorities alike and without discrimination of any sort. Above all, it means universal participation in a Government that serves the people who elect it on the basis of equality through a direct secret vote. That can only serve to benefit a people. It is no exaggeration to say that civilization as we know it today would not exist without democracy. The lack of democracy therefore has very dire consequences that have an impact on the human development of the planet.

Today, my country has lost its democratic system of governance as a result of a coup d'état against its legitimate President, José Manuel Zelaya Rosales, who was sent to another country in the middle of the night. While his human rights were being violated, some of his close colleagues were detained and a state of affairs was in effect decreed that divided one part of the population against the other, including soldiers and families, and impeded the exercise of the rights of all Hondurans. The notion of consulting the people in a non-binding referendum — to take place on a Sunday in June, in order to determine whether they agreed to a change in the general elections scheduled for November and whether a constituent national assembly was to be established to ascertain whether or not the Honduran people wanted to improve the structure of the Constitution — was sufficient reason for extremely conservative forces to break with the constitutional order in Honduras.

The call for that referendum to seek the opinion of the Honduran people in no way violated either the Constitution or the law. In no way did it deviate from the President's powers or from the Constitution of

Honduras, which all of us have pledged to respect and which gives the President the power to call for plebiscites, referendums and any other undertaking that seeks to determine the people's will. The President wanted to strengthen Honduran democracy — which the people call for so fervently, which cost us so dearly and which we so desperately need.

In early 2009, President José Manuel Zelaya Rosales sent a congratulatory letter to President-elect Barack Obama of the United States of America. In it he said that his historic victory reaffirmed that the sacred values of democratic tolerance were the best tools to combat social exclusion and discrimination in a free society that respected civil rights. The President also stated that all of us were experiencing a global crisis that touched on various aspects of economic and social life, political democracy, climate change, insecurity and terrorism, among others. His thesis, then as now, was that there is an urgent need for all of us to devote ourselves to designing a new global democratic architecture to benefit the vast majority of the dispossessed.

We hold out the hope that — as the European Union, the Rio Group, the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, the Central American Integration System and the brotherly peoples and Governments of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Mexico, Spain, the United States of America and Uruguay have done — the General Assembly will today comprehensively condemn the coup d'état in Honduras and call for the country's President to be restored to his legitimate functions, for the human rights of all to be respected and for no Government constituted as a result of the coup to be recognized.

We express our great appreciation to the brotherly countries of Latin America for their unconditional support. In particular, we thank Costa Rica for its hospitality in hosting President Zelaya in these very difficult times. We are also especially grateful to the Government of Nicaragua, which along with Costa Rica has invited the President to take part in the meeting of presidents currently taking place in Managua. It is now for the General Assembly, which has always proclaimed democracy and the equality of nations, to pronounce itself. It also has a historic opportunity to show that it is capable of putting into practice the purposes and principles for which it was established.

We are also grateful to the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General, who have clearly and precisely issued three fundamental appeals. The first is to save the life of the President and his family and to uphold the rights of all Hondurans. Secondly, they have called for the return of the President of the Republic to the full exercise of the presidency to which he was elected. Thirdly, they have called for the rejection of any illegitimate Government that usurps the place of the President of the Republic under any pretext. To that end, Honduras will be eternally grateful to all the nations of the world.

May God bless the United Nations, the world and Honduras at this historic moment.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on this occasion on behalf of the States members of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). The members of this new organization of solidarity and transformation, are the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The text of the statement I am about to read out was approved yesterday by the Permanent Representatives of the ALBA members in the United Nations, in consultation with their highest national authorities. It therefore reflects the views of the heads of State on the issue at hand today. This statement reads as follows:

"[The] States members of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) represented in the United Nations:

"Reject and condemn the coup d'état against José Manuel Zelaya, Constitutional President of the Republic of Honduras, staged by the Honduran armed forces with the connivance of the oligarchy and the reactionary forces of that country;

"Call for an immediate return to the rule of law in the Republic of Honduras and the reinstatement of Manuel Zelaya, the legitimate Constitutional President of that country;

"Declare that our Governments do not and will not recognize any Government other than the democratically elected Government of President Manuel Zelaya;

"Urge the international community not to recognize any Government other than the legitimate Government of President Manuel Zelaya;

"Call upon the Honduran armed forces to return immediately to their barracks in order to avoid incidents that could lead to bloodshed;

"Appeal to democratic elements within the armed forces to support President Manuel Zelaya and his people;

"Demand that the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Patricia Rodas, who was kidnapped by the Honduran armed forces, be released immediately and that her life and dignity be respected;

"Condemn the kidnapping and maltreatment by the Honduran armed forces of the Cuban, Nicaraguan and Venezuelan Ambassadors, which is in violation of international law;

"Demand that the lives and dignity of President Zelaya's family and all members of the Honduran Government be fully respected;

"Request that His Excellency Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, President of the United Nations General Assembly, immediately convene a meeting of the General Assembly to consider this breakdown in the constitutional order of the Republic of Honduras;

"Express our solidarity with the democratic, public-spirited demonstrations staged by the Honduran people who are calling for the reinstatement of President Manuel Zelaya and fighting for the democratic principles that have been violated; and

"Declare our unconditional solidarity with President José Manuel Zelaya."

This statement was signed in New York by all Permanent Representatives of the aforementioned countries yesterday afternoon, 28 June 2009.

With the assent of the President of the General Assembly, I would now like to make some remarks on behalf of the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to express most emphatically and categorically our support for the Government of President Zelaya, demand that the Government that

took power through the coup step down, call for the Government imposed by force not to be recognized, and unconditionally demand the immediate return of President Zelaya to the functions to which he was elected by popular vote.

On behalf of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, we wish to thank the President of the General Assembly for calling this meeting and echoing the world's voice on this matter. We also congratulate him on his firm and courageous positions in defence of democracy, the right of peoples to elect their own Government, and, in general, his support for the process of change unfolding on our continent. That process of change is at work in Honduras, and that is why the cause of Honduras has brought us together today in the General Assembly.

The era of popular power is dawning in the Americas. A new world is taking shape that will break the mould of the democracy of elites, the old democracy of corrupt financial, economic and political leaders who oppress the peoples in order to serve transnational interests — in other words, neoliberal dictatorships that deny human rights. Here and there, new and pluralistic forms of participatory democracies are playing a leading role in that process, and, as members are aware, the coup d'état in Honduras is not going to stop it. That is why the countries of the world must support the restoration of democracy and help to defeat this new attempt to turn back the tide of history.

In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, through torture, tens of thousands of abductions, murders and acts of State terrorism to overthrow or assassinate presidents such as Salvador Allende and Juan José Torres, hope was crushed but not destroyed. Hope is being reborn everywhere, and Honduras has become a focal point for deciding the present and future of democracy, and not only in the Americas. That is why we cannot allow Honduras to fall into the filthy hands of reactionary, pro-coup military leaders and oligarchs.

The same dark forces are once again calling for violence and planning assassinations and coups d'état — in Venezuela not long ago and more recently in Bolivia, Ecuador and in Honduras today — and are seeking to destroy this awakening, birth and rebirth of the people's struggles, but they will not be able to prevent the forward march of democratic and revolutionary on our continent. They will not prevail; they will not return.

A spark has ignited and is gradually spreading, becoming the spirit of peace. It is moving forward like an annunciation — a message on behalf of the Earth, the seas, the rivers, human beings and all life, saying no to death and yes to the hope that, together, the people and the Earth, humankind and nature, will liberate themselves. Tyrants, reactionary armies, those who have sold their souls to the devil will not prevail. To the contrary, indigenous peoples, workers, patriotic soldiers, women, intellectuals, young people — all those who once had no voice — are now crying out with the force of the winds and sowing the seeds of liberty throughout the world.

It is no accident that President Zelaya was overthrown, because he wanted to consult with his people in order to open the way for popular participation and a new democracy infused with the people's spirit and social justice. That is what oligarchies fear; they are prepared to break any law and to commit any kind of crime to stop the processes of inspiration and change. They believe it is possible to do so, and they have tried in thousands of ways. That is why they are conspiring in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and many other countries on our continent, and it is why they pursue the campaign against the heroic Republic of Cuba. It is an international conspiracy against the forces of change.

We do not accept and will not accept the coup d'état against President Zelaya. We will not accept any other President. We are certain that a people-inspired democracy, a participatory and leading democracy, has taken root in Honduras and that this new kind of democracy will emerge strengthened from this process. We hope that the generals and civilian oligarchs will not fire on the Honduran people. They could have quite a surprise if they do. They cannot count on the impunity enjoyed by other dictatorships enjoyed in former times. The times have changed; they are times of change, times of renewal, times of transformation, even times of revolution.

We express our firm solidarity with the popular demonstrations for democracy, dignity and the return of President José Manuel Zelaya taking place in Honduras. The Honduran people are not and will not be alone at this crucial hour of history.

We welcome the support that many international organizations of various kinds and heads of State throughout the world have expressed in condemning

the coup and calling for President Zelaya to be restored to power. However, we wish to issue a grave warning that the coup in Honduras is not an isolated event; a total counter-revolution is being plotted and carried out throughout the world against those peoples and Governments that are raising the flags of freedom, self-determination and sovereignty. Today, we must build and coordinate a great international front for democracy and against fascism — which is rising again here and there, as demonstrated in the recent European elections — against violence and for peace. These are now essential tasks.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): From the outset, the Government of Mexico has categorically condemned the arrest of the constitutional President of Honduras and appealed to all parties involved for the immediate restoration of the rule of law and democratic institutions and values, as well as for the return of President Zelaya Rosales to his office.

I should now like to make the following statement on behalf of the Rio Group, which represents all States of Latin America and the Caribbean.

"The Rio Group expresses its strongest condemnation of the coup d'état perpetrated in the Republic of Honduras, which has violated the democratic constitutional order in that country by illegitimately removing from his office the constitutional President, José Manuel Zelaya Rosales. The Rio Group also rejects the use of armed force and the arbitrary detention of the head of executive power, who was forced to leave Honduras.

"The Rio Group believes that the breach of constitutional order is inadmissible and unacceptable, and that it constitutes a practice that the societies of Latin America and the Caribbean have rejected categorically. The Rio Group reiterates that adherence to democratic values and principles and strict respect for constitutional order and the rule of law should prevail over all political differences.

"The States members of the Group express their full readiness to contribute to the immediate restoration of constitutional order in Honduras. They also call upon all political actors of the Republic of Honduras to avoid violence, and they demand the immediate, unconditional restoration to his functions of the legitimate constitutional

President of the Republic, José Manuel Zelaya Rosales, and of all other democratically constituted powers."

I would like to add that Patricia Rodas, the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Honduras, arrived in Mexico yesterday, and today is travelling to Managua with the President of Mexico, Felipe Calderón Fournier, to attend the meeting there of the Central American Integration System. Regional forums are responding to the Honduran crisis.

It is important that the General Assembly take into account that yesterday the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) approved a declaration in which it resolved, first, to condemn vehemently the coup d'état against the constitutionally established Government of Honduras, and the arbitrary detention and expulsion from the country of the constitutional President, José Manuel Zelaya Rosales, which has produced an unconstitutional alteration of the democratic order.

Secondly, it demanded the immediate, safe and unconditional return of President José Manuel Zelaya Rosales to his constitutional functions.

Thirdly, it declared that no Government arising from this unconstitutional interruption would be recognized.

Fourthly, it instructed the Secretary-General of OAS to urgently attend the meeting of the Central American Integration System that was to take place in Managua, Nicaragua, and in accordance with article 20 of the Inter-American Democratic Charter, to carry out all necessary consultations with the member States of the Organization.

Fifthly, it vehemently condemned all acts of violence and especially the reported arbitrary detention of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Patricia Rodas, other ministers of Government, as well as the Mayor of San Pedro Sula, and associated individuals, and demanded that their physical safety and security be respected and that they be released immediately.

Sixthly, it immediately convened a special session of the OAS General Assembly to take place on Tuesday, 30 June 2009, to take whatever decisions it considered appropriate, in accordance with the Charter of the Organization of American States, international law, and the provisions of the Inter-American Democratic Charter.

Finally, it instructed the Secretary-General of OAS to transmit the resolution to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Mr. Palouš (Czech Republic): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia; Norway, member of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Armenia, align themselves with this statement.

On 28 June, foreign ministers of the European Union strongly condemned the military actions directed against democratically elected President Zelaya and part of his cabinet, violating the constitutional order of Honduras. The European Union urges the immediate release of all detained government representatives and calls on all relevant parties and institutions to refrain from violence and to strive to find a swift and peaceful solution to the current situation. This should be done in accordance with the existing constitutional order of Honduras and the principles of the rule of law and democracy.

The European Union highlights the importance of restoring the constitutionality and stability of the political and security situation in the country, and underlines the importance of ensuring that fair, timely and transparent presidential elections be held in November 2009. Constitutional rules and respect for human rights are the cornerstones of democratic governance throughout the world.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): What happened yesterday in Honduras was a simple coup d'état, with no need for any ornament or explanation. The pro tempore presidency of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) has issued the following statement:

"The pro tempore presidency of UNASUR emphatically rejects the attempted coup d'état in Honduras and gives its fullest support to the constitutionally elected Government of José Manuel Zelaya. UNASUR does not recognize any situation involving a breach of the democratic order or the rule of law, or that jeopardizes the stability of the Republic of Honduras. It especially condemns the kidnapping of President

Zelaya and his ministers and the taking of Government buildings by groups seeking to destabilize democracy, and expresses its determination not to recognize any Government other than that which is legal and legitimately elected. It calls for the restoration of democracy and the immediate return to power of the democratically elected President, José Manuel Zelaya. Lastly, UNASUR expresses its conviction that internal conflicts should be resolved solely within the framework of democratic institutions and the rule of law."

Finally, a declaration issued yesterday by the Government of Chile emphatically condemns the coup d'état in Honduras, which violates constitutional order in Honduras and flagrantly flouts the provisions of the Charter of the Organization of American States and its fundamental institutions. The Government of Chile calls for the restoration of democracy in Honduras and the immediate reinstatement of its legitimately elected President, José Manuel Zelaya.

Mr. Moreno Fernández (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We appreciate and support the timely convening of the General Assembly session to consider the tragic events taking place in the Republic of Honduras, a Latin American sister nation and prestigious member of this Organization.

In my capacity as Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement, I will read out the entire statement that was recently adopted by the 118 members of the Non-Aligned Movement on the situation created as a result of the military coup d'état against the constitutional President of the Republic of Honduras.

"The Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement expresses its strongest condemnation of the coup d'état carried out in the early hours of yesterday morning, Sunday, 28 June, against the constitutional President of the Republic of Honduras, a sister nation that is a full member of the Non-Aligned Movement.

"The Coordinating Bureau categorically rejects the breach of the democratic constitutional order that has taken place in the Republic of Honduras, as well as all violent actions against the people and legitimate Government of that country.

"By reaffirming its adherence to the principles and purposes governing the Non-Aligned Movement, including the principle of the rejection of unconstitutional change of governments, the Coordinating Bureau calls upon the international community to strongly condemn the coup in the Republic of Honduras.

"The Coordinating Bureau expresses its full support to and solidarity with the people and constitutional Government of the Republic of Honduras in the current circumstances and calls for the reinstatement of the rule of law in that country and the immediate and unconditional reinstatement of the functions of the sole legitimate representative of the Honduran people, President Manuel Zelaya."

The clear position of the Non-Aligned Movement that I have just read out, reflects the unanimous voice of the international community against the coup d'état in Honduras. Countless Governments, international organizations and personalities, including the United Nations Secretary-General, have already expressed themselves in this regard in a strong and united voice.

Allow me now to continue my statement in my national capacity, on behalf of the people and Government of the Republic of Cuba. First of all, I wish to align myself with the statements made by the representative of Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group and by the representative of Venezuela on behalf of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas.

Cuba strongly condemns the brutal and criminal military coup d'état that has taken place in the sister nation of the Republic of Honduras and calls for the immediate reinstatement of the rule of law in that country. By acting in the same manner as the most cruel and violent Latin American dictatorships of the past, the pro-coup military attacked the residence of President Zelaya by dark of night and force of arms.

They staged the coup to silence the voice of the people and to prevent an important democratic referendum that would have taken place on Sunday in Honduras. Foreign Minister Patricia Rodas and the ambassadors of Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela were kidnapped and beaten by the pro-coup military, in flagrant violation of international law and the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Other members of the constitutional Honduran Government and their relatives are facing persecution and outrages.

The tragic events in Honduras immediately remind us of similar events that have taken place all too often in Latin America. How can we fail to remember the airplanes and tanks that, under General Pinochet, shelled the presidential palace in Santiago de Chile on 11 September 1973, where President Salvador Allende died heroically? How can we forget the bloody coup against President Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala? How can we forget the military Governments that caused tens of thousands of deaths on the soil of many Latin American countries in the 1970s to 1980s? How can we forget the treacherous attempted coup against President Chávez in Venezuela in 2002, which was frustrated by the people on the streets?

The underhanded coup in Honduras is a coup against us all. It is a coup against the sacred values upheld by the United Nations. It cannot go unpunished. We cannot negotiate with those who took part in the coup because that would make us complicit in legitimizing a usurper Government created by the use of force.

Cuba calls upon all States, international and regional organizations and all other members of the international community to unequivocally condemn the coup d'état, to disregard the spurious authorities that have imposed themselves on Honduras and to demand the reinstatement of the rule of law in that country, including the immediate and unconditional return and full reinstatement of the functions of the only legitimate representative of the Honduran people, President Manuel Zelaya.

Cuba and Honduras are closely linked by history. During the time of insurrections in Cuba in the nineteenth century, Honduras was a refuge for numerous independence fighters expelled from our homeland for conspiring against the colonial Power. In times of crisis, Cuba has always given the Honduran people its support and solidarity, including at times when there were no diplomatic relations between our Governments.

José Martí, the apostle of Cuban independence, rightly said that Honduras is a generous nation in which we must have faith. Cuba has every faith in the Honduran people. Those promoting hatred and violence will never break the will of a humble but brave and grateful people which, since the time of the rebel Chief Lempira and following the example of

patriot Francisco Morazán, have always shown an indomitable spirit of resistance and defence of justice.

History cannot be erased in a moment. Sooner rather than later, truth and justice will again shine out in the homeland of Morazán. Latin America has learned its lesson and has greatly changed. The time of military dictatorships and forcibly imposed Governments is gone and will never return. Our region will not allow a backward step in its fight for a better future for our peoples. The people and constitutional Government of Honduras can always count on the solidarity and unconditional support of Cuba.

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): First and foremost, we would like to associate ourselves with the statements delivered on behalf of the Rio Group, the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas and the Non-Aligned Movement.

We would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. I thought we would never again have to meet on the issue of Central America, which we had to address in this very forum in the 1980s as a result of the acts of aggression in our region, and in particular against our country. I thought those were events of the past, but today all of us are here to commit ourselves to reject and never again allow an act of aggression against the people of Honduras and their constitutional order, or against Central America.

At dawn yesterday, the Republic of Honduras, the homeland of Francisco Morazán, hero and founding father of Central American independence, was humiliated, violated and trampled underfoot by a coterie of Honduran soldiers who carried out a coup d'état while in the pay of a Honduran oligarchy that has yet to understand the new reality of our peoples and that the people are the sole genuine sovereigns in every country of the world. To the brotherly people of Honduras, Nicaragua would like to say that the Sandino nation rejects the coup in the most categorical terms. We will spare no effort to ensure that our brother President José Manuel Zelaya Rosales is restored to his functions, thereby fully re-establishing constitutional law and order in Honduras. We call on the Honduran people, armed with their historic courage, to continue to mobilize peacefully and to prevent those who carried out the coup from becoming their executioners.

Those who carried out the coup, who are the ill-fated puppets of a right-wing of times past, should know that, for the first time in its history, the Americas as a whole, from Canada to Tierra del Fuego, has unanimously rejected and condemned in the most explicit terms the coup d'état perpetrated yesterday. They should also know that the General Assembly demands that the rule of law be respected and that President Zelaya be unconditionally and immediately returned to Tegucigalpa as the sole constitutional leader of Honduras. Moreover, they should know that the leaders of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) began meeting in Managua last night, where they have unequivocally, resolutely and overwhelmingly condemned the coup d'état carried out by the soldiers. They should also know that, following the summit held on 2 June, during which Cuba's notorious exclusion was brought to an end, the Organization of American States yesterday also condemned the suspension of the constitutional order in the most emphatic terms. They should know that, at this very moment in the Nicaraguan capital of Managua, the leaders of the Latin American Integration System and of the Rio Group, along with those of ALBA, are making their positions known with the same unwavering conviction. They should know that there is no corner of the Americas or the world that will recognize those who carried out the coup d'état. Wherever they may hide, we will dislodge them with the power of democracy and the solidarity of the peoples of Morazán, Sandino, Martí, Bolívar and San Martín. They should know that there are no longer any banana republics on the continent where oligarchies can continue to exploit the peoples of the Americas with impunity.

The tragic irony is that, in running roughshod over a sovereign people and depriving them of their inalienable right to express themselves in a popular referendum, those who carried out the coup claim to be acting in favour of democracy. The shamelessness of the logic employed by those holdovers from the history of Latin America and the Caribbean is clear. Just imagine the retrograde and extreme right character of the coup perpetrators, who have committed the supreme act of treason because their democratically elected President dared, in carrying out a law on citizen participation, to consult the people on a possible referendum next November. In other words, those who carried out the coup have acted because the President of all Hondurans has sought the opinion of his people

on the possibility of holding a referendum. What would have happened if President Zelaya had directly carried out the referendum? He would probably have been sent directly before a firing squad, instead of being forcibly sent into exile.

Who can talk about elections in Honduras at this moment? Given the circumstances facing the people of Honduras, we cannot talk about elections. Who would call them? Military coup plotters who violate the Constitution? Before we can talk about elections, we must restore the democratically elected Government and its President.

We warn against any bloodshed in Honduras, and demand the immediate and unconditional release of those who have disappeared or been kidnapped. Likewise, we condemn the violence through which, in the course of several hours yesterday, Minister Patricia Rodas was kidnapped. She is a woman who has demonstrated incredible courage in the service of justice and the struggle of peoples in solidarity. We also denounce and condemn the cowardly and violent abduction of the ambassadors of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua, who accompanied Minister Rodas. That flagrant violation of international law, and in particular of the Vienna

Convention, is an act of aggression against our respective countries, for which there will be no impunity.

Above and beyond that, it is Honduran democracy that has suffered the most. No martial law or curfew will be able to silence the calls of the Honduran people for the freedom that has been wrested from them. The people, President Zelaya and his Government, along with the peoples of the Americas and the unanimous support of the entire international community, will prevail.

At this tragic time, I would like to recall the words of the hymn from the time of our own liberation from the Somoza dictatorship to tell the Honduran people that they are the owners of their history and the architects of their liberation. I should also like to remind the soldiers who carried out the coup that the children of Morazán cannot be sold out, nor do they give up.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the Ambassador of Nicaragua, worthy representative of the heroic Sandino people and Government, for her courageous words.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.